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Message Music a Universal Genre

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Message Music a Universal Genre

Description

Message Music is a collaboration of music from many different genres, that is meant to communicate universality, and bring about healing for individuals, couples, families, groups, and the community. It has a global message, and we are one. Finding its roots in an eclectic collection of folk, spiritual, gospel, blues, jazz, rhythm and blues, Motown, Fusion, Metaphysical or other genres "Message Music," transcends all genres and allows people to join in a universal quest to unite and find collective consciousness and way of being together that brings acceptance and love. It has always existed, in some circles, it will be described as "the message in the music, or music with a message," but defining it simply as "message music" enables the listener to participate without creating the image of religion or an affiliation to a social organization that defines the music. In this manner, the music allows one to rise above and engage in a personal journey that unites both the internal and the external experience. Music evokes memories with a range of emotions and social meaning. There are times music communicates messages that we do not have words to describe. Music happens within the context of culture and creates a time capsule of what was occurring at the moment the music was recorded.

Keywords

Therapeutic Music, Relaxation, Music, Social Meaning, Culture, Message Music

Disciplines

Accessibility | Adult and Continuing Education | Alternative and Complementary Medicine | Catholic Studies | Christian Denominations and Sects | Christianity | Cognitive Psychology | Counseling | Counselor Education | Curriculum and Social Inquiry | Disability and Equity in Education | Disability Studies | Educational Leadership | Educational Psychology | Gender Equity in Education | International and Area Studies | Leadership Studies | Mental and Social Health | Missions and World Christianity | Music Therapy | New Religious Movements | Other Religion | Performance Studies | Practical Theology | Psychiatry and Psychology | Psychology | Religious Thought, Theology and Philosophy of Religion | Social and Behavioral Sciences | Special Education and Teaching | Teacher Education and Professional Development | Transpersonal Psychology

Comments

Music has always united people in rituals, ceremony, life events, and social happenings. Meaning can be found in religious, spiritual, and secular music and can transport us to experience consciousness at different levels. Finding meaning and purpose allows us to connect to ourselves and others and form healthy relationships. Music can help us heal from life losses, traumatic events, by assisting us in adapting, connecting to others to avoid isolation and feelings of loneliness, and by transcending painful memories. Therapeutic and spirit music has been utilized with people of all ages and in a variety of settings. Efforts to integrate music with mental and behavioral health, medicine, spirituality, and religion is happening globally. As the world we live in allows us to communicate and connect globally, message music will be key in uniting us as one.

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Message Music a Universal Genre

Clare E Steffen, Ed.D., ND, CADCII, ICADC, CNHP, CMH, BCC

Defining Message Music as a Universal Genre:

Music has always been a way to communicate feelings, struggle, and the need for change. It is a way to communicate across racial, cultural, and social barriers. It uplifts and inspires. There are many historical examples of this and over many different music genres. Music brings people together in an effort to overcome obstacles and to transcend conditions that oppress, and it can be a vehicle that offers a commitment to social change. Music can also serve the function of healing, and finding a way to reach a state of transcendence. Whether found in a ceremony, rituals, or cultural celebration, it has always been there as a means of communicating and bringing people together to share emotions and connect to one another. Finding its roots in an eclectic collection of folk, spiritual, gospel, blues, jazz, rhythm and blues, Motown, Fusion, Metaphysical or other genres "Message Music," transcends all genres and allows people to join in a universal quest to unite and find collective consciousness and way of being together that brings acceptance and love. It has always existed, in some circles, it will be described as "the message in the music, or music with a message," but defining it simply as "message music" enables the listener to participate without creating the image of religion or an affiliation to a social organization that defines the music. In this manner, the music allows one to rise above and engage in a personal journey that unites both the internal and the external experience. Music evokes memories with a range of emotions and social meaning. There are times music communicates messages that we do not have words to describe. Music happens within the context of culture and creates a time capsule of what was occurring at the moment the music was recorded. Because of this truth, it allows us to return to that previous time and re-experience the music sometimes with a memory and perception of related events, and sometimes with new experiences and views. When we join together in music we share a vision and connect to one another and for that moment set aside our differences, judgments, and criticisms; we come from a place of acceptance. "Message Music," is inspirational and uplifting. It can be found in all categories of music and the intent is to create a separate genre entitled, "Message Music" that recognizes the social value and the necessity to preserve this occurrence in music history and to recognize its contribution to music, social experience, social change, and cultural purpose and meaning. (C. Steffen, 1999, 2000a, b, 2001, 2016a, b).

The concept of synchronicity exists and this is indicated by the fact that a commitment to "Message Music" was occurring with Denny Jenkins and his brother, Michael Jenkins in around the timeframe, and they shared the same mission as Dr. Clare E Steffen. Denny aptly describes "Message Music," in the following manner: "Message music is about connecting spiritually; it's realizing, without doubt, we are more alike than we are different. It's about seeing a little of everyone in everyone. It's about the journey (experience) called life, mind, body, soul, and spirit. It's about hope, faith, love, patience, perseverance, peace, assurance, trust, truth, esteem, etc. All the positives enhancing life in spite of self (negative forces), Prayer and knowing, and the lack thereof. It's knowing faith without works is dead. It's about realizing your dreams (self-realization minus self), even if you are presently living a nightmare, day in and day out. This new exciting vision covers the entire spectrum of genres because it's not about the style of music, it's the content. It's not about the messenger or how it's marketed, it's about the message, Re-Birth." (Jenkins, 2015b)

Innovators of Message Music:

Influenced by secular as well as religious and spiritual music, the innovators of "Message Music" from Spirit2Spirit, (Founded by D. Jenkins and M. Jenkins, 2000) are inspired By Earth-Wind & Fire, Steely Dan, Santana, and Fred Hammond, Spirit 2 Spirit is one of the elite forces in Message/Christian based music who diligently works to be a voice for God in that field without limitation to any present musical genre, (Jenkins, D. 2015b). The mission of message music is to

help mankind recognize spirituality, from religion, clarify; man's understanding from God's, understanding and discern, interpretation from the truth. Denny Jenkins (Jenkins, 2015b).

From a young age, Dr. Steffen saw the opportunity to create the connection between music and healing and brought music to the elderly in retirement, convalescent care facilities, VA Clinics and hospitals, and Mental Health facilities. Never expecting to make this a career, in her mid-twenties she was hired by a community college to bring music therapy to various settings and groups of people. This project was funded by Older Adult Education and Mental Health Funding. Clare E Steffen, Ed.D., ND, CADCII, ICADC, CNHP, CMH, NCC, BCC is a licensed psychologist, certified natural health professional, certified drug and alcohol counselor, board-certified counselor, national board certified counselor, and life, wellness, and business coach. Dr. Steffen has over forty years providing educational and mental health services to children, adolescents, adults, couples and families in a variety of settings. Committed to being a social entrepreneur, and promoting diversity and inclusion when aligned with healthy advocacy, Dr. Steffen has dedicated her career to the development of choice, the healing of trauma, and building resilience, and sustainability for all people regardless of color, race, or creed. Coaching is a natural extension of her training as an educator and mental health service provider because it allows her more freedom to focus on a broader perspective of life, wellness, and business/leadership development/executive coaching. Her special blend of combining natural health, wellness, and a research criteria-based approach to coaching create the perfect marriage between allopathic, natural health services, and coaching to create a balanced life.

Wanting to integrate wellness into mental health and to bring creative forms of therapy, Clare Steffen became a naturopath and naturopathic minister upon completing these doctoral degrees at Trinity School of Natural Health in 2001. She also is a Master Herbalist and Certified Natural Health Profession, and completed these programs through Trinity School of Natural Health. Understanding that many individuals struggle with substance use issues she became certified as an alcohol & drug counselor, which allowed her to provide the total holistic picture of mind, body, and spirit. She worked in Indian Health and was able to utilize a natural health model in providing mental health services. Committed to bringing Message Music and Wellness to others, in 2011 she founded Coaching Choice College and CE4Coaches (Steffen, 2016a, b) which provides wellness coach training to individual preparing for board certification. Dr. Steffen is a university professor and teaches mental health, wellness, psychology and counseling courses, and specialty topics to undergraduate and graduate students. She is a published author on self-help and health and wellness topics, previously hosted a health and wellness radio program that was simulcast in two states (AZ and NJ), and hosts multiple websites on health and wellness, along with her YouTube channel from Choice Studios. Over the past thirty years, Dr. Steffen has incorporated a wellness model into mental health services in her private practice.

Sharing the Vision of Message Music, Social Change, and Universality:

Again, sharing a similar vision, Denny Jenkins sees music from the view of ministry and founded a Non-Profit organization to promote this vision. Spirit 2 Spirit is a totally unique approach to Music and Ministry. "We are advocates and innovators of the new genre "Message Music" and a platform for the concept of ministries adopting ministries/sharing partnerships," (Jenkins, D. 2015a). He and his brother, Michael are committed to the social concern of homelessness and feeding the hungry and believe that "faith without works is dead."

Keith Martin, Founding and Executive Director of 2SaveSouls Records in Parkville, Maryland shares the vision of using his efforts as a social entrepreneur to promote Message Music, and to bring this and other genres to people globally. His organization has brought together a band of singers, song-writers, musicians, preachers, ministers, healers, teachers, and community leaders to spread the word of the mission to access community healing through music and education. The music of Dr. Clare Steffen and Spirit2Spirit (Denny and Michael Jenkins and their band) can be found on the 2SaveSouls label. He works closely with each artist, the Spirit2Spirit Non-Profit Organization, and groups to promote the message and share the vision by becoming a family that

lovingly supports one another in their efforts. His mission is to bring a healing message through music and to reach people through a unified voice of all the musicians, religious and secular leaders, speakers, and artists he represents. The concept is to bring the music but also workshops, conferences and trainings to anyplace where the message will be openly received or there is a willingness to learn. (Martin, K., Steffen, C, 2018).

Each in their own way, cross-country Keith Martin and the Jenkins brothers on the East Coast of the United States and Dr. Clare Steffen on the West Coast they share the same vision of social change through music and a commitment to healing. The significance of a social change movement in music is documented in history, through The Peace Movement, The Black Power Movement and Women's Liberation of the 1960s and 1970s. During times of social discord and disharmony, music plays a role in assisting people in expressing the need to join together and promote change.

Music Brings Meaning:

No matter what environment we work or exist in, we all want to know that we have meaning. A purpose in life drives us to achieve remarkable things, and create balance in our lives. It is our relationships that uniquely define us, and the contributions we make. The delicate balance between competing and creating evokes an internal tension, that when directed allows us to develop a visionary focus. It is important to remain authentic to oneself, which can be very difficult in the demanding society in which we live. Social networks provide means by which we can communicate in a multi-dimensional manner, but it can also become a trap and disrupt our efforts at communicating on an intimate level. Some of our most profound moments come out of simplicity. Message music can be utilized to teach us how to align with the simple truths in life can assist in creating personal balance. Assisting individuals and groups in building an authentic foundation can guide them through life. Mindfully and intentionally we can create social meaning that promotes universality, acceptance, and connectivity to establish a oneness and harmonious message through music. (Steffen, C. 2000a, b).

Integrative Healing Through Music:

Committed to change, Dr. Steffen saw a way to integrate wellness and traditional or Western Medicine approaches to mental and physical health. Having a choice is key in establishing the freedom to change and to continued growth and development. Influenced by the works of Dr. Deepak Chopra (1989, 2015), Dr. Daniel Amen (1998, 2015), and Dr. Daniel Siegel (2018). Having worked with individuals, couples, and families who experience trauma individually and inter-generationally, Dr. Steffen has provided treatment and designed educational programs that focused on promoting choice as a path to healing and social change. Believing that individuals can move beyond survival, and even resilience to create sustainability, Dr. Steffen designed programs to teach these concepts and train others to promote wellness and to tap into the creative way that moves the individual from automatic responses that perpetuate unhealthy thoughts, feelings, and behaviors to metacommunication and ultimately transcendence. These same states of being can be paralleled through and in music. Dr. Steffen writes lyrics and songs with intentionality and a focused vision of bringing about healing and wellness. She is dedicated to overcome a "sickness model" of treatment and to bring a wellness model through integrating approaches that empower and promote self-healing. Understanding that Earth Medicine is not really an alternative and that it has always been with us, as has "Message Music," and to respect the idea that creating this genre allows us to return to purest form of acknowledgment. Healing music has always been of the people, by the people, and for the people.

The music produced by the organization, Spirit2Spirit, is driven by the driving forces of two brothers, Michael, and Denny Jenkins. Together the two have over 50 years of musical experience. Michael plays bass, keyboards, and percussion. He has done lead and background vocals. He is a truly blessed lyrical writer, arranger personified, and a technical engineer, whose creativity in digital recording, editing, and mastering is unequalled. His ability to get the best out of an individual (not limited to musical or vocal artists) permits him to meet the challenge all producers and writers face in

creating a viable product to be loved and cherished by the general public, as well as revered and respected by those in the industry. Denny, by design, is a percussionist who uses the keyboards to enhance his songwriting ability. His strength lies in his lyric writing, and arrangements, and he sings lead and background vocals. He is a published poet who wishes to perform and produce and remain humble and modest in spite of the hype often associated with success in the musical industry. He wants most of all to make a contribution to God's creation that in some way helps in the healing process, and share with anyone willing to listen. The brothers have a musical background wherein their father, the late Thomas Jenkins helped form, manage, and sing for the Gospel Quartet "THE MIGHTY SOUTHERN ECHOES of Washington D.C". The group's name was retired in 1999 by Mr. Thomas Jenkins, Co-Founder, after 48 years of praising our Lord God in music and in faith. Michael and Denny were also blessed with the opportunity to play with their father's group a couple of years before it's retirement, and decided to continue their father's legacy through the group "SPIRIT 2 SPIRIT". The oldest Brother Thomas Jenkins Jr. also works with the group by way of songwriting, vocal arrangements, and tracks. (Jenkins, 2015b, c).

Cultural Differences Within and Moving Beyond Culture:

The concept of time is thought to be universal; however, it is not it is not linear in respect to the way in which it is conceived. Indigenous people may tend to view time in a manner that is more relational as opposed to dichotomous. Blocks or periods of time may be recalled with a connection to a social event. In this regards, *time* is marked or defined seasonally and in rhythm with the earth's clock.

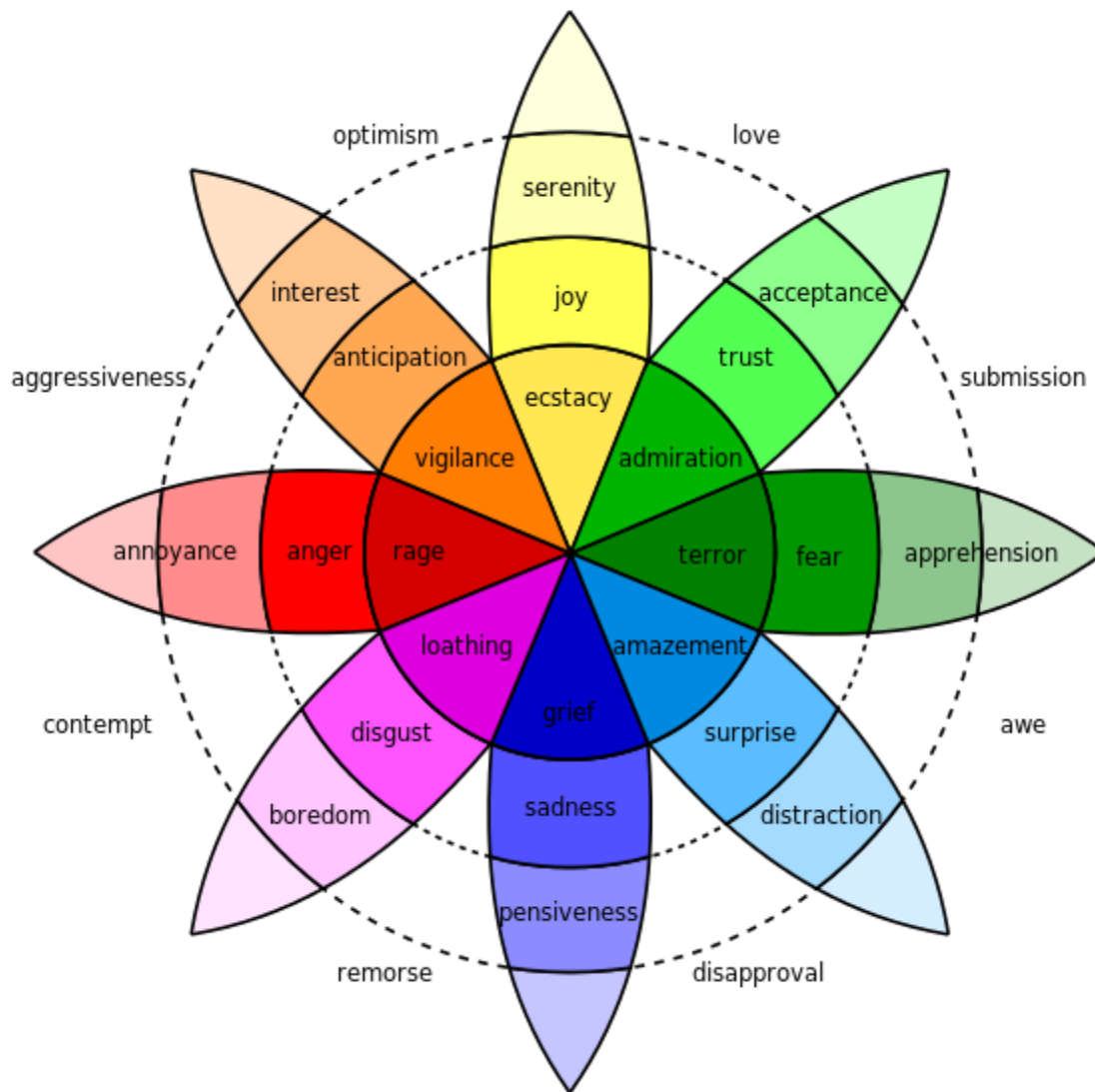
Westernized cultures have imposed a discrete understanding of time that can be driven by social rules pertaining to productivity. Discretionary time for relaxation is earned and time to be social and relate to one another is set aside. Christian beliefs remind us there is a time for every season, "A time to be born, and a time to die." (Ecclesiastes 3:1-8). We frame life events around the structure of time periods including mourning, which culturally we have come to believe happens with a specified time frame to be considered "normal." Human emotions occur on a continuum and may or may not fit within the defined guidelines of what is considered functional behavior, and when they do not we experience isolation.

Many individuals have begun to recognize that these delineated and socially defined expectations of time that dominate Westernized culture and have been perceived as superior and the "Gold" standard for the world may not always be the healthiest way to live. Groups of people have aligned with metaphysical beliefs that are based on Eastern Philosophy, Four Direction beliefs, African Religion, and Whole World Spirituality and New World Religion to experience freedom, transcendence, and to connect to heightened consciousness. The conduit for this movement and social change is frequently music that expressively communicates guided imagery, relaxation, and a relationship to a higher truth or more authentic way of being. The message is to slow down, remove stressors that evoke anxiety, and to make a universal connection. This transcendent experience can occur whether one is in a church praying, engaged in yoga, listening to music or having a cup of tea. In any environment, the music can be the vehicle that reminds us to slow down, listen to our bodies, breathe, and to connect to ourselves and others and to build a relational connection.

Music can be a personal experience in which we engage in an internal process and connect to our relationship to self. It can also be a shared experience in which we connect to others and collectively process emotions and unite. Music can bring about movement, on many levels; physical though gestures and dance, emotional as the sounds and words can evoke memories, mental as it can create new ways of thinking and perceiving, and social as music can become an indicator of alignment with a theme that symbolically represents a team spirit, a means to unite due to shared pain or loss, recognition of oppression, and a movement that calls for the need to elicit change. Music can be the thread that binds culture or the thread that adorns it to decorate and celebrate life.

The message is not only in the words, and within the meaning of the words; it is within the culture, and music happens within the context of culture. We define culture in terms of a host as the dominant and sub-cultures as a means of labeling and categorizing people and society. With the development of the internet and infra-structures to support that technology in more parts of the world, it has become a more global place. As that occurs, our definitions have been influenced and changed. The meaning we ascribe to experience has also changed. We have more exposure to the rites, rituals, and social mores from around the world. We can share in one another's experience and learn about the history that defined each culture. We have the ability to appreciate the differences and respect and share in an effort to learn more about one another.

Learning to understand one another can help us reduce fear that drives hatred and prejudice. When we operate from a place of fear we feel anxious and defensive, and may tend to make unhealthy choices because we fail to listen to one another. A safe starting line to connect and hear one another can be music. There are six emotions that are considered universal, *anger, disgust, fear, happiness, sadness and surprise* (Ekman, 1999). Robert Plutchik (2002, 2011) continued to explore the concept posed by Ekman on basic emotions and found that perhaps emotions may be more complex than Ekman suggested. He proposed that beyond simply experiencing these biologically driven basic emotions they can also be experienced in a positive and negative basis, and thus, he developed the wheel of emotions. Music in its eclectic format expresses all of these emotions and life experiences. It is not defined by linear time but instead dances through time weaving and connecting us in a beautiful tapestry that unites and promotes strength and empowerment.



Plutchik, R. Wheel of Emotions (2002, 2011)

The Rationale to Consider Message Music as a Universal Genre:

“Message Music,” represents the cultural changes that are occurring globally. People of all nations strive to have purpose and meaning in life. All people long for acceptance, forgiveness, and love as a path to healing the pains of trauma and loss. Every one of us wants to feel empowered to make healthy choices and to live a healthy life. At times we find these subliminal and meta-messages that empower us in the lyrics of a song, or through themed music, or by rising our voices in song. Collectively, we connect and rise above the socially driven limitations within culture that define and suppress us. Message music is the universal consciousness that is the spirit of oneness and is the universal truth that we are all deserving and worthy of love, and that according to Denny Jenkins (2015b) “we are more alike than different.”

Message music is not defined by one genre, the meaning can be found in many places across space and time, as we collectively become one voice of healing, sharing, supporting, empowering, and uniting in strength and love. Perhaps it is not a new genre so much as a way to promote a higher purpose and meaning with the suggestion that the desire to belong is universal and that we can make the choice to unite together and commit to a ministry to improving our communities locally and globally and to recognize the messages and calling have always been present and are within us through the music. It is bigger than any one genre and is not owned by anyone group and is more powerful than any host culture. It is a united force that resonates around the world, the message is in the music. It has always existed and always will. Putting a label to it as its own genre simply acknowledges the movement to collectively unite, empower and support universal healing through a conduit name, "Message Music."

The ability to heal is within each of us, individually and collectively. We can work together to heal ourselves, our families, our communities, and with a global intention. "Message Music," is the expression of that intention. We are in need of healing, physically, mentally, emotionally, and socially. The integration of music and intentional healing can be advanced through the recognition of the marriage of music and social messages that unite and connect us in acceptance, and universality.

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